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L. 7. Thus, tho' good & ill, Right & Wrong are ultimately perceived by the moral Sense, yet Reason assists its Operations, & in many Instances, strengthens & extends its Influence. We may argue concerning Propriety of Conduct: just Reasonings on the Subject will establish Principles for judging of what deserves Praise. But, at the same time, these Reasonings must always, in the last Resort, appeal to the moral Sense.

Farther; Reason serves to illustrate, to prove, to extend, to apply what our moral Sense has already suggested to us concerning just & unjust, proper & improper, right & wrong. A Father feels that paternal Tenderness is refined & confirmed by reflecting how consonant that Feeling is to the Relation between a Parent and his Child; how conducive it is to the Happiness not only of a single Family, but, in its Extension, to that of all Mankind. We feel the Beauty and Excellence of Virtue; but this Sense is strength-

ened & improved by the Lessons, which Reason gives us concerning the Foundations, the Motives, the Relations, the particular & the universal Advantages flowing from this Virtue, which, at first Sight, appeared so beautiful.

Taste is a Faculty, common, in some Degree, to all Men. But Study, Attention, Comparison operate most powerfully towards its Refinement. In the same Manner, Reason contributes to ascertain the Exactness, and to discover & correct the Mistakes of the moral Sense. A Prejudice of Education may be misapprehended for a Determination of Morality. 'Tis Reason's Province to compare & discriminate.

Reason performs an excellent Service to the moral Sense in another Respect. It considers the Relations of Actions, & traces them to the remotest Consequences. We often see Men, with the most honest Hearts & most pure Intentions, embarassed & puzzled, when a Case, delicate & complicated comes before them. They feel what is right,

they are unshaken in their general Principles, but they are unaccustomed to pursue them thro' their different Ramifications, to make the necessary Distinctions & Exceptions, or to modify them according to the Circumstances of Time & Place. 'Tis the Business of Reason to discharge this Duty; & it will discharge it the better in Proportion to the Care which has been employed in exercising & improving it.

We have already observed, that moral Truths may be divided into two Classes — such as are self-evident, & such as are deduced by Reasoning. With Regard to the latter, Reason is the Faculty, which must be employed. Cases arise, from the different States of Man, from peculiar Combinations of Circumstances, & from the particular Situation of the Persons, whom the Case interest: In all such it is impossible to form proper Rules, but by Reasoning from the Relations & Agreements of Things.

The Existence of the moral Sense has been

A And it has been gravely asked whether the wild Boy, who was caught in the Woods of Hanover would feel a Sentiment of Disapprobation upon being told of the Conduct of a Parricide.

denied by some Philosophers of high Fame: It's Authority has been attacked by others: The Certainty & Uniformity of it's Decisions have been arraigned by a third Class. We are told, that without Education, we would have been in a State of perfect Indifference as to Virtue & Vice; that an Education, opposite to that which we have recieved would have taught us to regard as Virtue that which we now dislike as Vice, & to despise as Vice that which we now esteem as Virtue. In Support of these Observations, it is further said, that moral Sentiment is different in different Countries, in different Ages, & under different Forms of Government & Religion; in a Word, that it is as much the Effect of Custom, Fashion & Artifice, as our Taste in Dress, Furniture, & the Modes of Conversation. Facts & Narratives have been assembled & accumulated to evince the great Diversity & even Contrariety that subsists concerning moral Opinions.[A] An Investigation of those Facts & Narratives cannot find a Place in these Lectures;

tho' the time bestowed on it might be well employed. It may, however, be proper to observe that it is but candid to consider human Nature in her improved & not in her most rude or depraved Forms. "The good experienced Man" says Aristotle, "is the last Measure of all Things." To ascertain moral Principles we appeal not to the common Sense of Savages, but of Men in their most perfect State.

Epicurus, as well as some modern Advocates of the same Philosophy, seem to have taken their Estimates of human Nature from its meanest & most degrading Exhibitions; but the noblest and most respectable Philosophers of Antiquity have chosen, for a much wiser & better Purpose, to view it on the brightest & most advantageous Side. "It is impossible", says the incomparable Addison, "to read a Passage in Plato or Tully, & a thousand other ancient Moralists, without being a greater & a better Man for it. On the contrary I could never read some modish

"modern Authors, without being, for some time,
"out of Humour with myself, & at every Thing about
"me. Their Business is to depreciate human Na-
"ture, & consider it under its worst Appearances.
"They give mean Interpretation & base Motives
"to the worthiest Actions — in short; they endeavour
"to make no Distinction between Man and Man,
"or between the Species of Men & that of Brutes"
True it is that some Men, & some Nations are Sa-
vage and brutish; but is that a Reason why their
Manners & their Practices should be general-
ly & reproachfully charged to the Account of hu-
man Nature? It may, perhaps, be somewhat to
our Purpose to observe, that in many of these
Representations, the Picture, if compared with
the Original, will be found to be overcharged.
For, in Truth, between Mankind, considered even
in their rudest State, & the <u>mutum et turpe pecus</u>
a very wide difference will be easily discovered.
In the most uninformed Savages, we find the <u>com-</u>

munes notitiæ, the common Notions & practical Principles of Virtue, tho' the Application of them is often extremely unnatural & absurd. These same Savages have in them the Seeds of the Logician, the Man of Taste, the Orator, the Statesman, the Man of Virtue & the Saint: These Seeds are planted in his mind by Nature, tho', for want of Culture & Exercise, they lie unnoticed, & are hardly perceivable by himself or by others. Besides, some Nations that have been supposed stupid & barbarous by Nature, have, upon fuller Acquaintance with their History, been found to have been rendered barbarous & depraved by Institution. When by the Power of some leading Members erroneous Laws are once established, & it has become the Interest of subordinate Tyrants to support a corrupt System; Error & Iniquity become sacred. Under such a System, the Multitude are fettered by the Prejudices of Education, & awed by the Dread of Power from the free Exercise of their Reason. These Principles will account for the many absurd & execrable Tenets & Practices with Regard to Go=

vernment, Morals & Religion, which have been invented & established in Opposition to the unbiased Sentiments, and in arrogation of the natural Rights of Mankind. ~~It will be more to our Purpose to observe, that even~~ But after making all the Exceptions & Abatements, of which these Facts & Narratives, if admitted in their fullest Extent, would justify the Claim, still it cannot be denied, but is even acknowledged, that some Sorts of Actions command & receive the Esteem of Mankind more than others; & that the Approbation of them is general, tho' not universal. It will certainly be sufficient for our Purpose to observe, that the Dictates of Reason are neither more general nor more uniform, nor more certain, nor more commanding than the Dictates of the moral Sense. Nay, further; perhaps, upon Enquiry, we shall find that those Obliquities, Extravagancies & Inconsistences of Conduct that are produced as Proofs of the Non-Existence or Inutility of the moral Sense, are, in Fact, chargeable to that Faculty, which is

meant to be substituted in it's Place. We shall find that Men always approve upon an Opinion — true or false — but still an Opinion, that the Actions approved have the Qualities & Tendencies, which are the proper Objects of Approbation. They suppose that such Actions will promote their own Interest, or will be conducive to the publick Good; or are required by the Deity; when, in Truth, they have all the contrary Properties — may be forbidden by the Deity, & may be detrimental both to publick & to private Good. But when all this happens, to what Cause is it to be traced? Does it prove the Non-Existence of a moral Sense, or does it prove, in such Instances, the Weakness or Perversion of Reason? The just Solution is, that, in such Instances, it is our Reason, which presents false Appearances to our moral Sense.

14 It will be proper to examine a little more minutely the Opinions of those, who allege Reason to be the sole Directress of human Conduct. Reason may, indeed, instruct us in the pernicious or useful Tendency of Qualities & Actions: But Rea=

son alone is not sufficient to produce any moral Approbation or Blame. Utility is only a Tendency to a certain End; & if the End be totally indifferent to us, we shall feel the same Indifference towards the Means. It is requisite that Sentiment should intervene, in order to give a Preference to the useful above the pernicious Tendencies.

Reason judges either of Relations or of Matters of Fact. Let us consider some particular Virtue or Vice under both Views. Let us take the Instance of Ingratitude. This has Place when good Will is expressed & good Offices are performed on one Side, & ill-will or Indifference is shewn on the other. The first Question is — where is that Matter of Fact, which is here called a Vice? Indifference or Ill-will. But Ill-will is not always nor in all Circumstances a Crime: And Indifference may, on some Occasions, be the Result of the most philosophic Fortitude. The Vice of Ingratitude, then, consists not in Matter of Fact

Let us next enquire into the Relations, which Reason can discover among the Materials, of which Ingratitude is composed. She discovers Good-Will & good Offices on one Side, & Ill-Will or Indifference on the other. This is the Relation of Contrariety: Does Ingratitude consist in this? To which Side of the contrary Relation is it to be placed? For this Relation of Contrariety is formed as much by Good-Will & Good Offices as by Ill-Will or Indifference. And yet the former deserves Praise as much as the latter deserves Blame.

If it shall be said that the Morality of an Action does not consist in the Relation of its different Parts to one another, but in the Relation of the whole Actions to the Rule; & that Actions are denominated good or ill as they agree or disagree with that Rule; another Question occurs — What is this Rule of Right? By what is it discovered or determined? By Reason, it is said. How does Reason discover or determine this Rule? It must be by examining Facts or the Relations of things. But by the Analysis which has been given of the particular Instance under our Consideration, it has appeared that the Vice of

Ingratitude consists neither in the Matter of Fact, nor in the Relation of the Parts, of which the Fact is composed. Objects in the animal World, nay inanimate Objects may have to each other all the same Relations, which we observe in moral Agents, but such Objects are never supposed to be susceptible of Merit or Demerit, of Virtue or Vice.

The ultimate Ends of human Actions, can never, in any Case, be accounted for by Reason: They recommend themselves entirely to the Sentiments & Affections of Men, without Dependence on the intellectual Faculties. Why do you take Exercise? Because you desire Health. Why do you desire Health? Because Sickness is painful. Why do you hate pain? No Answer is heard. Can you give one? No. This is an ultimate End, & is not referred to any farther Object.

To the second Question you may perhaps answer, that ~~the~~ you desire Health because it is necessary for your Improvement in your Profession. Why are you anxious to make this Improvement? You may, perhaps, answer again —

because you wish to get Money by it. Why do you 13
wish to get Money? Because, among other Rea-
sons, it is the Instrument of Pleasure. But why
do you love Pleasure? Can you give an Answer
for loving Pleasure, any more than for hating
Pain? They are both ultimate Objects. 'Tis im-
possible there can be a Progress in infinitum; &
that one thing can always be a Reason, why
another is hated or desired. Something must be
hateful or desirable on it's own Account, & because
of its immediate Agreement or Disagreement
with human Sentiment & Affection.

Virtue & Vice are Ends; & are hateful or de-
sirable on their own Account: It is requisite,
therefore, that there should be some Sentiment,
which they touch, - some internal Taste or Sense,
which distinguishes moral Good & Evil, & which
embraces one, & rejects the other. Thus are the Offi-
ces of Reason & of the moral Sense, at last ascer-
tained. The former conveys the Knowledge of Truth
& Falshood: The latter, the Sentiment of Beauty
& Deformity, of Vice & Virtue. The Standard of one,

founded on the Nature of Things, is eternal & inflexible: The Standard of the other is ultimately derived from that Supreme Will, which bestowed on us our peculiar Nature, & arranged the several Classes & Orders of Existence. In this Manner we return to the great Principle from which we set out. It is necessary that Reason should be fortified by the moral Sense: Without the moral Sense a Man may be prudent, but he cannot be virtuous.

It is with much Reluctance that the Power of our instinctive or intuitive Faculties is acknowledged by some Philosophers. That the Brutes are governed by Instinct; but that Man is governed by Reason, is their favourite Position. But fortunately for Man, this Position is not founded on Truth. Our Instincts as well as our rational Powers, are far superior both in Number & in Dignity to those, which the Brutes enjoy; & it were well for us, on many Occasions, if we laid our reasoning Systems aside, & were more attentive in observing the genuine Impulses of

A Not confined to the mere Office of conveying Impressions, they are exalted to the Function of judging of the Nature & Evidence of the Impressions they convey.

Nature. In this enlarged & elevated meaning, the Sentiment of Pope recieves a double Portion of Force & Sublimity.

And Reason raise o'er Instinct as you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that, 'tis Man

This Sentiment is not dictated merely in the fervid Glow of enraptured Poetry; it is affirmed by the deliberate Judgment of calm sedate Philosophy; our Instincts are no other than the Bridles of eternal Wisdom; our Conscience in particular is the Voice of God within us: It teaches; it commands; it punishes; it rewards. The testimony of a good Conscience is the purest & the noblest of human Enjoyments. Philosophers have degraded our Senses below their real Importance: They represent them as Powers, by which we have Sensations & Ideas only: But this is not the Whole of their Office; they judge as well as inform. If this be admitted, our moral Faculty may, without Impropriety, be called the moral Sense. It's Testimony, like that of the external Senses, is the immediate Testimony of Nature, & on it we have the same Reason to rely. In it's Dignity it is, without Doubt, far su-

perior to every other Power of the Mind.

The moral Sense, like all other Powers, comes to Maturity by insensible Degrees. It is peculiar to human Nature. It is both intellectual & active. It is evidently intended, by Nature, to be the immediate Guide & Director of our Conduct after we arrive at the Years of Understanding.

Reason & Conscience can do much; but still they stand in need of Support & Assistance. They are useful & excellent Monitors; but, at some times, their Admonitions are not sufficiently clear; at other times, they are not sufficiently powerful. At all Times, their Influence is not sufficiently extensive. Great & sublime Truths, indeed, would appear to a few; but the World, at large, would be dark & ignorant. The Mass of Mankind would resemble a Chaos, in which the few Sparks that would diffuse a glimmering Light would serve only to shew in a more striking Manner the thick Darkness with which they are surrounded. Their Weakness is strengthened; their Darkness is illuminated; their Influence is enlarged by that Heaven descended Science, which has

brought Life & Immortality to Light. In Compassion to the Imperfection of our internal Powers, our all gracious Creator, Preserver & Ruler has been pleased to discover & enforce his Laws, by a Revelation given to us immediately & directly from himself. This Revelation is contained in the holy Scriptures. The moral Precepts delivered in the sacred Oracles form a Part of the Law of Nature, are of the same Origin, & of the same Obligation, operating universally & perpetually. ~~On some important Subjects,~~

On some important Subjects, those in particular, which relate to the Deity, to Revenue and to a future State, our natural Knowledge is greatly improved, refined and exalted by that which is revealed. On these Subjects, one who has had the Advantage of a common Education in a Christian Country, knows more, and with more Certainty, than was known by the wisest of the ancient Philosophers.

One

One superior Advantage the ~~sacred Precepts Oracles clearly possess. They~~ Precepts delivered in the sacred Oracles clearly possess. They are, of all, the most explicit and the most certain. A public Minister, judging from what he knows of the Interests, Views and Designs of the State, which he represents, may take his Resolutions and Measures, in many Cases, with Confidence and Safety; and may presume, with great Probability, how the State itself would act. But if, besides this general Knowledge, and these Presumptions highly probable, he was furnished also with particular Instructions for the Regulation of his Conduct; would he not naturally observe and govern himself by both Rules? In Cases, where his Instructions are clear and positive, there would be an End of all further Deliberation. In other Cases, where his Instructions are silent, he would supply them by his general

general Knowledge, and by the Information, which he could collect from other Quarters, concerning the Counsels and Systems of the Commonwealth.

Thus it is with Regard to Reason, Conscience and the holy Scriptures. Where the latter give Instructions; those Instructions are super-eminently authentic: But whoever expects to find, in them, particular Directions for every moral Doubt which arises, expects more than he will find. They generally presuppose a Knowledge of the Principles of Morality; and are employed not so much in teaching new Rules on that Subject, as in enforcing the Practice of those already known, by a greater Certainty, and by new Sanctions.

They present the warmest Recommendations and the strongest Inducements in Favour of Virtue; They exhibit the most powerful Dissuasives from Vice. But the Origin, the Nature and the Extent

of the several Rights and Duties they do not explain; nor do they specify in what Instances one Right or Duty is entitled to Preference over another. They are addressed to rational and moral Agents, capable of previously knowing the Rights of Men, and the Tendencies of Actions; of approving what is good, and of disapproving what is evil

These Considerations shew that the Scrip-tures support, confirm and corroborate, but do not supersede the Operations of Reason and the moral Sense. ~~These sources of~~ Information with Regard to our Duties and Obligations, drawn from these different Sources, ought not to run in unconnected and diminished Channels: It should flow in one united Stream, which, by its combined Force and just Direction will impel us uniformly and effectually towards our greatest Good.

We

We have traced, with some Minuteness, and, we hope, with some Degree of Satisfaction to you, the efficient Principle of Obligation; and the several Means, by which our Duty may be known. It will be proper to turn our Attention back to the Opinions that have been held in Philosophy and Jurisprudence concerning this Subject. On a Review of them, we shall now find that, in general, they are defective rather than erroneous; that they have fallen short of the Mark, rather than deviated from the proper Course.

The Fitness of Things denotes their Fitness to produce our Happiness: Their Nature means that actual Constitution of the World, by which some Things produce Happiness, and others Misery. Reason is one of the Means, by which we discern between those Things, which produce the former, and those Things, which produce the latter. The moral

Sense

sense feels and operates to promote the same essen-
-tial Discriminations. Whatever promotes the greatest
Happiness of the whole is congenial to the Principles
of Utility and Sociability: And whatever unites
in it all the foregoing Properties, must be agree-
-able to the Will of God: For, as has been said once,
and as ought to be said again, his Will is gracious-
-ly comprised in this one paternal Precept — Let
Man pursue his Happiness and Perfection.

The Law of Nature is immutable; not by the
Effect of an arbitrary Disposition; but because it has
its Foundation in the Nature, Constitution and mu-
-tual Relations of Men and Things. While these con-
-tinue to be the same; it must continue to be the same
~~always~~ also. This Immutability of Nature's Laws
has Nothing in it repugnant to the supreme Power
of an all-perfect Being. Since he himself is the
Author

Author of our Constitution; he cannot but command or forbid such Things as are necessarily agreeable or disagreeable to this very Constitution: He is under the glorious Necessity of not contradicting himself: This Necessity, far from limiting or diminishing his Perfections, adds to their external Character and points out their Excellency.

The Law of Nature is universal: For it is true, not only that all Men are equally subject to the Command of their Maker; but it is true also, that the Law of Nature, having its Foundation in the Constitution and State of Man, has an essential Fitness for all Mankind; and binds them without Distinction.

This Law, or Right Reason, as Cicero calls it, is thus beautifully described by that eloquent Philosopher. "It is, indeed, says he, a true Law, conformable to Nature,

— tem

-tue, diffused among all Men, unchangeable, eternal. By its Commands, it calls Men to their Duty; by its Prohibitions, it deters them from Vice. To diminish to alter, much more to abolish this Law is a vain Attempt. Neither by the Senate, nor by the People can its powerful Obligation be dissolved. It requires no Interpreter or Commentator: It is not one Law at Rome, another at Athens; one Law now, another hereafter: It is the same eternal and immutable Law, given at all Times and to all Nations: For God, who is its Author and Promulgator, is always the sole Master and Sovereign of Mankind.

"Man never is," says the Poet in a seeming Tone of Complaint, "but always to be blessed." The Sentiment would certainly be more consolatory; and, I think, it would likewise be more just, if we were to say — Man ever is; for always to be blest. — That we should have more and better Things before us ~~that~~

than

than all that we have yet acquired or enjoyed is un-questionably a most desirable State. The Reflection on this Circumstance, far from diminishing our Sense or the Importance of our present Attainments and Advantages, produces the contrary Effects. The Present is gilded by the Prospect of the Future.

When Alexander had conquered a World, and had Nothing left to conquer; what did he do? He sat down and wept. A well-directed Ambition that has conquered Worlds is exempted from the Fate of that of Alexander the Great: It still sees be-fore it more and better Worlds as the Objects of Con-quest.

It is the glorious Destiny of Man to be always progressive. Forgetting those Things that are behind, it is his Duty, and it is his Happiness to press on towards those that are before. In the Order of

Providence,

Providence, as has been observed on another Occasion, the Progress of Society towards Perfection resembles that of an Individual. This Progress has hitherto been but slow: By many unpropitious Events, it has often been interrupted: But may we not indulge the pleasing Expectation, that, in future, it will be accelerated; and will meet with fewer and less considerable Interruptions.

Many Circumstances seem, at least to a Mind anxious to see it, and apt to believe what it is anxious to see — many Circumstances seem to indicate the Opening of such a glorious Prospect. The Principles and the Practice of Liberty are gaining Ground in more than one Section of the World. When Liberty prevails, the Arts and Sciences lift up their Heads and flourish. When the Arts and Sciences flourish, political and moral Improvements will likewise be

made.

made. All will receive from each, and each will re-
-ceive from all mutual Support and Assistance:
Mutually supported and assisted, all may be car-
-ried to a Degree of Perfection hitherto unknown;
perhaps hitherto not believed.

"Men, says the sagacious Hooker, if we view
them in their Spring, are, at the first, without Under-
-standing or Knowledge at all. Nevertheless, from
this latter Vacuity, they grow by Degrees, till they
become at length to be even as the Angels themselves
are. That which agreeth to the one now, the other
shall attain to in the End: They are not so far dis-
-joined and severed, but that they come at length
to meet."

Our Progress in Virtue should certainly bear
a just Proportion to our Progress in Knowledge.
Morals are undoubtedly capable of being carried

to

+ Hook. b. 1. c. 6. p. 8.

to a much higher Degree of Excellence than the Sci-
-ences, excellent as they are.

Hence we may infer, that the Law of Nature, though immutable in its Principles, will be progressive in its Operations and Effects. Indeed the same immutable Principles will direct this Progression.—

In every Period of his Existence, the Law, which the divine Wisdom has approved for Man, will be fitted not only to the cotemporary Degree; but will be calculated to produce, in future, a still higher Degree of Perfection.

A Delineation of the Laws of Nature has been often attempted. Books, under the Appellations of Institutes and Systems of that Law have been offer-
-ten published. From what has been said concerning it, the most finished Performances executed by human Hands cannot be perfect. But most of them

have

have been rude and imperfect to a very unnecessary, some, to a shameful Degree.

A more perfect Work than has yet appeared upon this great Subject would be a most valuable Present to Mankind. Even the most general Outlines of it cannot, at least, at present, be expected from me, at least in the present Course of Lectures.

Montgomery 68 g

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F. N.° 4.